WHY DO I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST?

R. B. GIRDLESTONE

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WHY DO I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST?

FOUR ADDRESSES TO BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL MEN

BY THE REV.

R. B. GIRDLESTONE, M.A.

HON. CANON OF CHRIST CHURCH, FORMERLY PRINCIPAL OF WYCLIFFE HALL, OXFORD

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INTRODUCTION

IN the autumn of 1903 it was decided to federate such London Prayer Unions as were willing to enter into association with a view to bring the facts and features of the Christian life to bear more actively upon the vast number of men daily congregating within the various business circles of the city of London. Such a proposal, it was thought, would not only awaken interest within the area represented by each Union, but would also enable the members to extend their influence by virtue of a wider combination.

The inauguration of the Federation of London Prayer Unions took place at the Mansion House, March 25, 1904. The Lord Mayor presided, and the Rev. Prebendary W. H. Webb-Peploe delivered a most earnest address to a large audience of business and professional men, who filled both body and platform of the Egyptian Hall.

The Council of the Federation felt that so encouraging and responsive a commencement should be followed by a series of addresses by one well qualified to speak to men upon the subject of the

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Foundation principles of the Christian Faith and Life.

Rev. Canon Girdlestone, M.A., most kindly undertook the task, and in this volume are set forth the Four Addresses which he delivered before appreciative and interested audiences.

The object of the Federation is to unite the existing unions in any effort which may extend the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ amongst the business and professional men of our time. Surely amid the many conflicting and perplexing voices to be heard to-day in every walk of life, there undoubtedly exists a need for the setting forth, simply but definitely, of the revelation of Divine truth as contained in the Word of God. To this end and for this object this little volume is sent forth with the earnest and prayerful desire that the perusal of the contents may bring to many readers fresh thoughts and awakened interest in the mission of Christ to be the Saviour of the world.

ALBERT A. HEAD,
Chairman of Council.

PREFACE

THE grounds on which myriads of people believe in Jesus Christ are, speaking generally, Traditional, Experimental, and Rational.

i. *Traditional.* Most Christians were taught to believe in Jesus Christ from childhood. They learnt the Apostles' Creed—in substance if not in form—as soon as they could learn anything. Their belief is an inherited belief. They accepted the religion of their forefathers to some extent, as they accepted their language, and found themselves members of a Christian community in which they were contented to abide.

ii. *Experimental.* A time has come in the history of many Christians when their beliefs have been put to the test. Their inherited religion has invaded their inner life. They have been rudely awakened by the consciousness of a conflict within, and they have been humbled by the feeling that their lower nature dominates the higher. Unable to get rid of their inward difficulties and failures, they have sought relief in various ways—in vain, and have at last been drawn or driven to find it by coming into contact with that very Being whom they have professed to believe in from childhood. They have sought Him and found Him; and He has become in a very practical sense their Saviour and their Prince.

Thus their religion, once little more than a profession, has become a reality.

iii. *Rational.* Current literature, conversation, and the thoughts which animate both, set some minds questioning and criticising. "What is Truth?" we ask. How are we to decide between conflicting opinions, between history and myth, between fact and fancy, between what is real and what is hypothetical? Everything seems open to question, and the most sacred of convictions and experiences are sometimes so explained as to be explained away. At such times we have to fall back on our third line of Testimony which is Reason; and it is to this that attention is now to be directed.

These Addresses were delivered in the Centenary Hall, Bishopsgate Street, during April and May, 1904, to business and professional men. They are intended to give a bird's-eye view of the Reasons for believing in Christ. They aim at presenting the positive side of Truth rather than at discussing objections. They offer stepping-stones across the stream of doubt, not a short and easy method of silencing doubters. Though necessarily condensed, they are the results of much thought and reading, philosophical, scientific, and historical, carried on during the last half-century. It is hoped that they may prove helpful, not only to the readers, but to others through them.

Perhaps I ought to add that they were delivered from notes in a colloquial and rather unconventional style, and are by no means Academic treatises.

R. B. G.

Wimbledon, *June*, 1904.

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I

THE BOOK OF NATURE: ITS READERS AND ITS WRITERS.

§ 1. *Nature: its Unity, Order, and Adaptation.*

CHRISTIANITY presupposes belief in God. It teaches us that God sent forth His Son into the world; that God was—in Christ—reconciling the world to Himself; that God raised Christ up from the dead. The first congregations to whom the apostles preached were already believers in God; and when St. Paul preached to heathen he began by reminding his hearers of the simplest elements of Theism. We must therefore begin our study by reminding ourselves what these are.

God is invisible; but the invisible may be detected by means of the visible; what God *is* may be known by what He *does*. It is on such simple ground that we believe in gravitation and in ether. They are inferred from careful and thoughtful observation. Accordingly, the primary appeal of the true Theist

(or believer that God is) must evidently be made to the Book of Nature.

This Book is a very large one, and consists of many volumes. The First Volume (from our point of view) is this earth on which we dwell. We know something now of its size, weight, form, and movements, of the materials from which its crust is composed, and of the order of the *strata* or layers which are beneath our feet. We are gradually becoming familiar with its surface; with its relative proportions of land and water; with its elevations and depressions; with its atmosphere and rainfall; with evaporation, gravitation, cohesion, and the other methods of its every-day working.

Passing from the material and elementary forces of our globe, we turn to another chapter in the Book of Nature. It consists of vegetable life, growth, and variation. The next chapter has to do with animal life. The fascination of these life-chapters is intense. The study of each creature, as one of our masters in science has said, would repay the toil of a lifetime. There is unsolved mystery in a bit of moss, an *equisetum*, an acorn, a butterfly, an egg, an artery, a muscle, a bone, a nerve, an eye, a brain.

The Second Volume of the Book of Nature has to do with our little servant the Moon; the Third tells of the Sun; the Fourth is concerned with the Planetary System; while the Fifth and all that follow unfold the wonders of the stellar universe.

But where is God? We have not reached Him yet. Meantime, let the Book of Nature be read thoughtfully and frequently. What impression does it produce? It gives us a sense of the vastness of the material universe; a sense of the system and order, rather than chaos, which pervades the whole; a sense of beauty in form, colour, proportion, sound; a sense of variety in the material, vegetable, and animal worlds; a sense of unity (not uniformity) which science has learnt to detect beneath this variety. We have learnt much in late years. It is only half a century since the doctrine of "the correlation of physical forces" was first taught; since *spectrum analysis* revealed our material relationship with the stars; since comparative anatomy became an every-day expression; since the analogies between the animal and vegetable worlds were seen in their fulness; since the continuity of certain species from pre-human times to the present was affirmed by the palæontologist; and since the laws of fertilisation and growth were read afresh by the embryologist and microscopist. The whole system of Nature, past and present, terrestrial and celestial, is thus seen more clearly than ever to be one—many parts of one whole.

There is yet another impression produced on the mind by the survey of Nature, when regarded both in its main elements and in its *minutiæ*, namely, the sense of adaptation, the adjustment of means to

ends, the ingenuity displayed (for example) in the various modes of seed-scattering, fertilisation, and growth; the co-ordination of the animal and vegetable world; the subordination of the lesser purposes in Nature to the greater; the check on the issue of boundless force so as to make it a help by its moderation and not a hindrance by its excessiveness.

§ 2. *Man in relation to what is below him and to what is above him.*

The impressions produced by the thoughtful reading of the Book of Nature have been all too briefly touched upon. But who *is* the reader whose mind is thus affected? It is MAN, who is part of Nature and yet capable of viewing Nature as if he were an outside observer.

That he is part of the system of Nature is evident from a consideration of his body. The materials of which it is composed are allied to those of which our earth has been built up in past ages; the food which nourishes him is either animal or vegetable; his structure, method of breathing, blood-circulation, means of locomotion, senses, nerves, brain, &c., bring him into line with the animal world.

As at present constructed, man is by no means the largest of animals, or the strongest, or the swiftest, or the most long-lived, or the most keen-

scented. He is totally incapable of making a spider's web or even a respectable imitation of a wren's nest. He does not clothe himself automatically as most animals do, or swim like a duck, or fly like an eagle, or change the colour of his skin so as to conceal himself amidst his surroundings without the aid of a paint-pot, like a chameleon.

In spite of all these deficiencies man finds himself a sort of lord of creation. What he loses physically he gains mentally, and is more than conqueror. He is master of the mineral, the vegetable, and the animal world. All things serve him, for he has the gift of reason. He takes an intelligent interest in his surroundings, observes them, takes note of them, studies their ways, generalises, and draws conclusions from what he sees; he is a walking commentary on Nature, sums up Nature in himself. He is constantly exercising imagination, forethought, concentration, combination, construction, administration. Do you want to know what a man is? See what he can do. Look at a repeater, an engine, an ocean steamer, a cathedral, a city, a halfpenny newspaper, a telephone, a laboratory, a hospital.

Hear a man talk! In spite of the confusion of tongues, which is peculiar to the human race, man's speech is one of the marvels of creation, coupled as it is with the power of writing. Wherein lies its secret? Undoubtedly in the power of expressing by conventional sounds not only material objects and

bodily needs, but mental conceptions, including figures, generalisations, abstractions, and ideas. As all Nature is built up from about seventy elements, so all language is constructed from seventy sounds, which can be reproduced in writing by some thirty characters. Remember this as you walk through a library.

Study one human being. It need not be a Socrates or an Aristotle, or a Bacon, or a Shakespeare, or a Nelson, or a Wellington; let it be just your own self! Let that study include your origin, growth, education, senses, mental endowments, capacity for business, art, music, force of will, shrewdness, memory; and let it include the moral and spiritual thoughts, feelings, conflicts, aims, of which you are conscious; together with your hopes and fears for yourself and your practical interest in the welfare of others. Take stock of the whole and put it down in black and white, and reflect on it.

Such is Man as the reader of the Book of Nature.

§ 3. *Indications of God gathered by Man from Nature.*

If man is the reader of the Book, who can be the writer? Who, in other words, is the author of Nature—including human nature?

May we take it for granted that Nature has an

author? Has Nature an origin? Does that origin imply an Originator?

If Nature were all on a dead, unchanging level, we, looking upon it from an outside point of view, might regard it as without beginning and without end; or if the order of Nature revolved in a fixed cycle, and the whole reverted periodically and exactly to its former condition, we might come to a similar conclusion. But this is not the case, so far as we can see, even with the material world or the solar system; whilst, if we include human nature in our consideration, we are driven to the conviction that we must look not only for an origin, but for an Originator; for the author of Personality cannot be less than Personal, though his consciousness must be very different from ours.

Plato and the other old philosophers only voiced the profound conviction of all thoughtful men when they spoke of a First Cause; and they would have cordially accepted the *dictum* of him who said, "Every house is builded by some man, but He who built all things is God."

In thinking out this subject we have to bear in mind what are the things the origin of which is to be accounted for. They include: (i.) Matter in its varied forms and modes, and in its component parts, elements, and proportions; (ii.) the Forces (if they are rightly so called) which regulate the operations of matter, such as electricity, light, heat, chemical

action, gravitation; (iii.) the Order which brings it about that the same causes invariably produce the same effects; (iv.) vegetable life, growth, and variation; (v.) animal life; (vi.) man with his mental, moral, and spiritual nature, and with all the strange phenomena of his personal existence and of the past history of his race.

The step from observation and thought to belief in God is by no means a hard one. By a necessity of our being we read into Nature what we find in ourselves. We read force into Nature because we are personally conscious of existing will-force and muscular force. We read law into Nature because we make rules and laws. We read prevision, provision, adaptation, and purpose into Nature because we are always looking ahead, providing for the future, adjusting means to ends, and modifying plans according to circumstances. In such ways as this we come to the conclusion that the Book of Nature is the work of a Being in some degree analogous with ourselves, though not limited by human restrictions.

The celebrated philosopher Descartes once said, "Nature conceals God; man reveals God." Most true; and it is when we bring human reason to bear on all that is within us as well as all that is around us that we find ourselves unconsciously becoming Theists. The unity of Nature leads us to believe in the unity of God. The personality and spirituality

of the springs of human nature point to the personality and spirituality of God. The vastness, beauty, and order of creation testify to the glory of God; so also the moral sense which tells us that right is right and that wrong is wrong convinces us of the righteousness of God.

This is the true anthropomorphism, and we need not be ashamed of the word. It recognises that the human is the key to the superhuman, and that men are so constructed that they believe not only in their own existence and in that of the outer world, but in an Originator and Sustainer of all creation, who is in some important sense akin to themselves. His works are, indeed, infinitely vaster, and His designs more far-reaching than those of the greatest of men. Moreover, His will is not checked by human mental or physical limitations. What the best of us do with an effort and gradually, He can do easily and at once; what we do by the use of our brain, senses, and muscles, He does by purely spiritual forces; whilst we act in dependence on the various endowments which are granted to the race or for the individual, He acts independently as an absolute sovereign, under the direction and restriction only of wisdom, righteousness, and holy purpose. This is all expressed in the words of Paul, quoted from the hymn of his fellow-countryman, Aratus, "We are His offspring." In other words, we are not only dependent on Him for life and all things, as the

trees are, but also there is some such analogy between the springs of our nature and the springs of His as there is in the case of offspring and parent. One man calls Him "the Inscrutable"; another "an ever-present eternal impulse towards the Best"; another "a power not ourselves making for righteousness"; but we may go yet another step, and call him "Father."

§ 4. *Agnosticism no Solution of the Problems of Nature.*

Speculative minds have proposed various theories as alternatives to the true Theism just sketched out. There are the atheistic theories which include Fate, Chance, Necessity, and automatic Evolution. These all push Personality into the background, but as long as human nature remains personal, it will testify to a Personality at the back of the material universe. Then there is Pantheism, which tells us that "the All" is God, and which neglects the distinction between what we *do* and what we *are*. And there is Polytheism, which has little to say now in the face of the established unity of Nature. And, lastly, there is the temporary or provisional expedient of Agnosticism, a title borrowed from the inscription to the Unknown God on the altar at Athens. Agnosticism recognises the difficulty of the position, acknowledges its own ignorance, considers

that there are not enough materials for a decision, and takes refuge in the *dictum* that God is inconceivable.

How shall we answer the agnostic? May we not say that while we grant that we cannot conceive the nature of God and His modes of thinking, feeling, and working, since He is by nature an infinite omnipresent and eternal Spirit, yet on the other hand it would be far more difficult to account for Nature (inclusive of man) *without* the presupposition of God, and that the human race, in spite of all its defects and vagaries, testifies to a deep and permanent conviction that God is.

But there is a more excellent way. We fall back upon Paul's remedy for agnosticism, "Whom ye ignorantly worship, Him I declare unto you." So saying, Paul led his hearers on from the first principles of Theism to the mission of Jesus Christ. What is hinted at by Nature is declared by Christ. In Him we shall find the true secret of the Book of Nature, the guide to the reader, and the revelation of the Writer. But before considering His claims we must turn our attention to the other Book, which gives us the authentic materials for studying His mission.

POSTSCRIPT TO THE FIRST ADDRESS.

I should like to refer to two or three books by scientific men on the subject of this address. Professors Balfour Stewart and Tait, men of the highest position in science, brought out a book called "The Unseen Universe," some thirty years ago. Its main teachings are still up to date, and deserve careful consideration. In Section 54 they say, "Let us begin by stating that we assume as absolutely self-evident the existence of a Deity who is Creator of all things." They proceed to quote Herbert Spencer's words in his "First Principles," which run thus: "We are obliged to regard every phenomenon as a manifestation of some power by which we are acted upon; though omnipotence is unthinkable, yet, as experience discloses no bounds to the diffusion of phenomena, we are unable to think of limits to the presence of this Power; while the criticisms of science teach us that this Power is incomprehensible."

Let me in the second place refer to that charming and instructive book called "The Unity of Nature," by the late Duke of Argyll. He was an enthusiastic student of Nature and of Science, and was endued with excellent common sense. In the book just named he touches on many of the subjects referred to above, and gives interesting illustrations of Purpose in Nature.

Lastly, I desire to refer to the two volumes on natural theology by the most eminent among men of science, the late Professor Sir George Stokes. These "Gifford Lectures" were delivered in Edinburgh in 1891 and 1893, and they give the Professor's thoughts on the relations existing between Science and Natural Theology. He speaks with no hesitating voice on Creation, the Fall, the Mission of Christ, Miracles, and kindred topics, and does not hesitate to affirm his conviction that evolution in the form in which it is frequently stated fails to account for the phenomena of the universe, or for the facts of human nature. In the second volume the Professor speaks out more fully and freely than in the first; and I cannot but express my thankfulness that he thus devoted some of his last published thoughts not to Nature, but to Nature's God.

II

THE BIBLE: ITS AGE, CONTENTS, INSPIRATION, AND INFLUENCE.

§ 1. *What is the Bible?*

THE nineteenth Psalm, which is familiar to most of us, begins with Theism and goes on to Scripture. This suggests the true method of study. Accordingly we approached our subject by a discussion of Theism—"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork"; and we considered the way in which we read Power and Purpose and Unity beneath the phenomena of the natural world. We saw that these three elements in Nature are read into Nature by man, and that man is a sort of connecting link between Nature and its First Cause, God. So that we may say there is a sort of stratification in existence—that which is below man (the infra-human), then the human, and then the super-human. Thus Nature is interpreted by man, and man is also

inferred to be the interpreter of God, to some extent at least. Nature conceals God; man reveals God.

Having laid down that broad basis to the best of my power in the time allotted to me, I come to consider God's second Book, which we call the Bible. At first sight it seems rather trifling to ask you to concentrate your thoughts on a little book which you can hold in your hand, after considering the subject of the first Address, namely, the Book of Nature, of which this whole earth is only one volume. Yet, after all, a small volume may contain a great deal of truth, and a small object may be unspeakably precious. We were told a few days ago in the newspaper that after ten years' research three grains of a new element have been discovered, and that they are supposed to be the only grains of it in existence at present. It is evident, therefore, that you cannot go by bulk in estimating value, and there is value in this Book which you may set against the value of a million globes.

The Bible—what is it? It is a little library in itself. Sixty-six books are bound up together in this volume, the earlier ones having been written at least fifteen hundred years before the latest. The writers are at least forty in number, of many different kinds and positions in life, but almost all, if not quite all, Jewish in their nationality. So that we have a series of volumes contributed by a number of men

of one land and race, but to some extent independent of each other, who unwittingly produce a book which is one, in spite of all its variety of contents. Accordingly we inspect it with intense interest as something unique, quite different in its composition from any of the other religious books in the world.

§ 2. *Age of the New Testament.*

How old is it? I like to begin with what is latest in studying great subjects, so I begin with the New Testament, and I ask, "How old is the Greek volume of which we have the translation?" The first printed edition of it was published in 1516. That does not take you very far back. We owe that to Erasmus. The oldest extant manuscript of it takes you back to A.D. 350, as nearly as can be reckoned. Still there is a period of three hundred years to bring you back to the age of the Book itself, *i.e.*, to the time of the Apostles and Prophets of the New Testament. How is that period, the time between A.D. 350 and (I will say) A.D. 100, when the last of the writers must have been dead, to be bridged over? That period is bridged over for our purposes by means of quotations still extant in early Christian writers who lived before A.D. 350, and who therefore had access to copies of the Books, which have since perished. In A.D. 303 the Roman Emperor Diocletian ordered that every single copy of the

Scriptures should be done away with; and consequently the great mass of manuscripts were destroyed; but still, in the providence of God there remained a number of books the writers of which had made use of these older manuscripts. The celebrated Lord Hailes (Sir David Dalrymple) once heard propounded at a dinner-table this question: Supposing there were no copies of the Scriptures extant, would it be possible to reproduce the New Testament from the early Christian writings of the first three centuries? He set to work on this idea, and in two or three months' time, being a man of a literary turn of mind, and possessing all the books requisite for the task, he succeeded in spreading on the table a series of quotations from the writings of the Early Fathers in which every single verse of the New Testament was to be found, excepting about eight verses.

So that there lie embedded in the extant works of the writers of the first three centuries enough to enable you, if you had the key to the order, to reproduce the whole of the New Testament.

Such, putting it very shortly, is the way in which we learn the age and substantial integrity of the New Testament; we go back from the present day to the beginning of the age of printing, then through the manuscript age to the Early Fathers, and finally, by their means, we reach into the First Century from which the Book has come.

§ 3. *Age of the Old Testament.*

What is the case with regard to the OLD TESTAMENT? We have not got such old manuscripts of the Hebrew Scriptures as we have of the Greek; and it is rather disappointing to know that we have an earlier copy of a Greek translation of the Old Testament than we have of the Hebrew original itself. But there is this remarkable fact, that we have amongst us to-day two opposite parties, the Jewish community and the Christian community; and these both hold the same Old Testament, and they have both held it ever since the time of our Lord; these two communities are traceable back to the time of Christ; then both were one, and both held the same Book. We thus have an interesting method of testing the contents and the authority of the Old Testament as it was held in the days of Christ Himself. In a word, the Jewish Bible is the Christian Old Testament now, and must have been substantially the same when Christianity separated from Judaism.

Can we get any further back? Yes, we can. Supposing you were living in the days of Christ, in the days of Paul, in the days of Josephus, in the days of the celebrated Jew, Philo; you would find all these different persons quoting a series of Books which they called the Scriptures, meaning thereby not New Testament Scriptures, but Old Testament

Scriptures. Thus, there are no less than six hundred quotations from the Old Testament Scriptures in our New Testament. Philo and Josephus both give some account of the Old Testament Scriptures, the latter writer being very clear and definite in his view of them. There are also some writings before our Lord's time, preceding that time by 250 years, which we have in the Apocryphal Books; these also refer to the Books of the Old Testament, and usually divide them into three sets, viz., "the Law, the Prophets, and the other books." That is the method in which the old Jewish Bible used to be divided. It was not put in the order in which we have it now, but it contained the same Books. First came the Law, the five Books of Moses; then the Prophets, which include Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings—those they called "the Earlier Prophets," "the Later Prophets" being the Books that we call the Prophets; and then came another collection of Books which they called Sacred Writings, the Psalms, Proverbs and Job, and "the other books" which were not in the previous groups, such as Ecclesiastes and Daniel, finishing up with Chronicles, because Chronicles was regarded as a post-Captivity Book. That was the way in which the most notable Jewish writers regarded the Old Testament; and thus you can trace our Old Testament as a collection of books of authority as far back as within 150 years of the time when the

Old Testament must have been actually completed.

You will say, perhaps, "Why cannot you go further?" For one very simple reason; there are no contemporary writers to appeal to; all their works have perished. There must have been numerous Hebrew writers, secular annalists for example, in the previous times. They are sometimes referred to in the Old Testament itself, but their works have all perished, and the only Books we have remaining are those which comprise our Old Testament.

I ought, however, to add this, that if you start from the very latest Books of the Old Testament, which are Nehemiah and Malachi, you can push your way back, by means of quotations, to the earliest Books; for each of these late writers refers to the Law and the Prophets either verbally or substantially. You can thus make your way back step by step to the time of David, and from David to the time of Joshua, and from Joshua to the time of Moses, so that by means of quotations you can obtain the comparative age of the various departments of the Old Testament. I often wish that we marked our Bibles in such a way as to show in each Old Testament Book what use was made of it by the later Old Testament writers. It seems to me very clear that all these writers quoted their predecessors; and (if I may make a personal reference)

I may say that I have a Bible in which these quotations are marked in blue ink, so that when I am reading the first page of Genesis I know which Old Testament writers have referred to it, and similarly all the way through the Old Testament. In that way the Book is made to speak for itself, and you can build up the story of the Scriptures of Israel from the latest to the earliest Books.

§ 4. *Historical Value of the Old Testament.*

What are the characteristics of this remarkable set of Books? The most important characteristic to begin with is this, that the great mass of the Books are historical. The end of the first Book fits in with the beginning of the second; in fact, there is a general system of dovetailing, from Genesis and Exodus right away down to Nehemiah. These Books form a continuous series, and the only documents which break the continuity are the Books of Chronicles, which are a repetition to a large extent of the Books of Kings and of some earlier Books as well. So that you have a great historical chain, such a chain as you cannot find in any other historical writings which have passed down to us from ancient times.

When you take this mass of historical materials in the Old Testament and investigate it you find that all the history may be regarded either as exter-

nal or internal. By "external" I mean that which has to do with the history of other nations, and by "internal" that which has to do with the history of the one nation only. Taking English history as an illustration, the battle of Waterloo would be external because it has to do with the French; the passing of the Reform Bill would be internal because it has to do with nobody's affairs but our own. Similarly there are narratives in the history of the Old Testament which bring Israel into touch with other nations—that is the external part; whereas there is a great deal which only has to do with Israel itself, such as its legislation, its biographies, its psalms, and so on.

§ 5. *External History of Israel.*

Look at the external. It is very important to pin the external history down to what we know of external history in other ways. You are very soon introduced in the Bible to the relationships between the founder of the Israelitish race and other nations. You find, for example, in the twelfth chapter of Genesis—one of the vital and important chapters—that Chaldea comes to the front. Abraham comes from Ur of the Chaldees; he tramps up, with his company of people, to Haran, far north in Mesopotamia. Thence he strikes in a south-westerly direction and finds himself in Palestine. Thus our Abrahamic

history starts from Chaldea. Very shortly afterwards, two chapters further on, we find war going on between two sets of people, all out in the Far East, the Elamites and Mesopotamians and such like, who go to war with some of the populations in Canaan. We have the very names of the kings introduced in the fourteenth chapter. We say, "Here is a bit of external history. Does it fit or does it not fit with what we know from external sources?" There are the names of various men introduced. We have Amraphel, and Arioch, King of Ellasar, and Chedorlaomer, and so on. Now, strange as it may seem, if you walk into the British Museum you can actually be introduced to the first of these men. You will find there the profile of Hamurabi, whom Oriental scholars identify with Amraphel. This is one of the most interesting of modern finds. It is a great thing for busy men who love their Bible to keep up to date in these things; those who are not up to date imagine that the 14th of Genesis is "unhistorical;" those who are up to date know better. Let me add that quite lately there has been published in England and America Amraphel's Code of Laws, showing that he was by no means a barbarian or a savage. One of the learned men who has published an account of this Code, sets it up against the Law of Moses as if it were better. Well, it is older, and there is no reason why we should not give Amraphel full

credit for it. The laws in question are engraved on a black stone, which also has on it a figure of Amraphel receiving the Code of Laws from, shall I say the true God? No; the Sun-God. I do not wonder that people worship the sun. If we wished to worship anything material we should worship the sun because he is so useful to us. But our Bible teaches us better than that, it traces the legislation of Moses to Him who made the sun, which is far grander. The Being who is described in the first chapter of Genesis as bringing into existence or originating the heavens and the earth, that is the Being who spoke to Moses and set before him the method of righteous administration which we call the Law of Moses. My present object, however, is to show you how the fourteenth of Genesis brings Abraham into touch with foreign nations, and the touch is represented to you in the present day in the British Museum.

This opens a fascinating subject, for I suppose Israel got into touch with more nations in old days, and is in touch with more nations now, than any other nationality under the sun—unless it be our own. It is a most remarkable phenomenon, explain it how you will. Among the Kings accurately referred to in Scripture there were the Kings of *Assyria*, Pul, Tiglath-Pileser, Shalmaneser, Sargon, Sennacherib, Esar-Haddon; Kings of *Egypt*, Shishak, Zerah, Necho, Hophrah; Kings of *Syria*, Ben-

Hadad, Hazael; later *Babylonian* Kings, Merodach-Baladan, Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar; *Persian* Kings, Cyrus, Darius, Xerxes, Artaxerxes. Every one of those kings is reproduced on the monuments which have been brought to light and interpreted through the skill of Oriental scholars. Some of them were formerly thought to be pious inventions on the part of the Biblical writers. For example, Sargon is only mentioned once in all history, viz., in the twentieth chapter of Isaiah. Accordingly unbelievers rather used to mock at our Biblical students, and say, "Who is your Sargon?" And Biblical students hung their heads and had to say they were very sorry they did not know, perhaps the name stood for somebody else. But while our celebrated English explorer, Henry Layard, who only died a little while ago, was at work in the ruins of Khorsabad, one of the old ruins on the Tigris, he uncovered a great figure with Sargon's name written on it. Since those days Sargon's words and deeds have been published by the Orientalists. Nobody now would say, "Who is Sargon?" Men know too well; and we need not hang down our heads any longer. In much later days people used to say of another man, "Who is Belshazzar?" His name occurs in Daniel, but in no other ancient book. Well, we did not know what to answer. Personally, I am always content to say I do not know, but some people do not like that, and they

suggested that perhaps Belshazzar was another name for somebody else. Quite within the last few years Belshazzar has come to light. There is hardly anybody left now who has not come to light, I am glad to say. If there is any uncertainty it has to do with Darius the Mede; but there are reasons for believing that this personage has also been identified.

§ 6. *Internal History of Israel.*

If you have a history which touches the outside world in a number of places, and if you can test those places and find that the history in your Book fits in with the history outside your Book, you have got very strong evidence for the truth of your document, because you naturally say, "If the external history is to be trusted, I have a good reason for trusting the internal history." You cannot get outside evidence with regard to domestic narratives. I should think it would be rather difficult to find in the public records of other countries much on the subject of our Reform Bill, although it almost tore our nation into two. In many internal matters you would not find external evidence at all. Thus the internal history of Israel contained in the Old Testament very much depends for its trustworthiness on external history, which you see you can trust.

But there is something to rest upon in addition, namely, the wonderful candour and honesty of the

writers. If you search the records of the old Oriental kingdoms, you will find there is one thing they are very shy of putting down, namely, the reverses which befell them; they do not like to record defeats. I hardly know at the moment, speaking generally, amongst the various tablets brought to light, any case of a defeat being recorded in the published documents of an ancient Eastern nation; they do not seem to like it, somehow; they smooth it over, just as some people in the Far East at the present time are minimising their defeats and putting them down to accident, when perhaps the accident after all was done on purpose by the opposing party. That is human nature. But the wonderful thing about the Bible is that the writers are very careful to record their people's downfall, and point out that it was owing to their wrong-doings as a nation. The same is the case with wrong-doings of individuals. The very chapter which introduces Abraham on the scene, the twelfth of Genesis, finds him telling a lie at the end of the chapter, pretending that his wife was his sister, and being put to shame in consequence. And so it is all through the Historical Books.

§ 7. *Historical Character of the New Testament.*

That is the case with the Old Testament; how is it with the New? We seem to be in a different

atmosphere when we come to its pages. Bear in mind that while the Old Testament takes you from about B.C. 2000—that is, from the age of Abraham, whom I am taking as my starting-point now—to B.C. 400, the New Testament history all lies in a nutshell, it is all practically the story of one generation. St. John must have been born during the childhood of our Lord, and he lived on to extreme old age, so that the whole of the volumes refer to what took place in his lifetime. Thus the case is different from that of the Old Testament; and yet, curiously enough, in these little Books which make up the New Testament you find external history and internal history. I could imagine it might have been otherwise, but there, as a matter of fact, you have the Cæsars, the Herods, the governors in Palestine, Pontius Pilate and the rest, the priests, the rulers, the notables, such as Gamaliel, the governors in foreign cities, Gallio (the brother of Seneca, the philosopher), and so on. No one could have invented the names and the peculiar titles of the persons which occur in the Gospels and the Acts. The very title, for example, of the rulers in Thessalonica, which happens to be rather a peculiar one, was in the days of St. Paul on an archway which bridged over one of the streets of the city. The archway, title and all, are (I believe) now packed away in the British Museum; it is thus kept safe, because if it remained in Salonica it might have

crumbled or got smashed during some of the troubles that have come upon the people in later times. Thus, the external history of the New Testament can be tested very much as that of the Old Testament; and it stands the test equally well.

§ 8. *Candour of the New Testament Writers.*

The argument, of course, is naturally the same with regard to the candour of the writers. Just as in the Old Testament we saw the transparent honesty of the writers, so it is in the New. The most notable Christian in the days of the Apostles was Peter, and every one of the four Gospels interrupts the great tragedy which is being recorded in its later chapters to tell the sad story of Peter's base denial of his Master. I do not think it is possible to find a greater instance of honesty and candour in any historical work than what is thus to be found in the Four Gospels.

We have also to remember with regard to all these Books that we only have a selection of writings, memoirs you may call them, and that a great deal is left unsaid. There are no "annals" in the Old Testament, and still less is there a continuous history in the New, but it is the business of the historical student to put things together in the most reasonable order, and to mark the period of time which is covered by the sacred writers by com-

paring their narrative with that of the secular historians.

§ 9. *The Testimony of Language to the Truth of the Books.*

I should like to point out that there is further confirmatory evidence of the historical nature of these Books and of their trustworthiness. It is this: the very language in which they are written testifies to their truth. The Hebrew of the Old Testament has its stages, and I might almost say its dialects; and thus we are able to test by careful examination the comparative ages and dates of the different parts. I do not think enough attention has hitherto been paid to this matter; but there are certainly these stages. Owing to the fact that the Israelites came into touch with other nations, you find what you may call local peculiarities where the writers picked up words from outside sources. Just as, here in London, Yiddish is spoken close by the City, in the streets behind Bishopsgate, so there was a peculiar kind of Jewish language spoken in different places in ancient times. For example, during the time that the Israelites were in Egypt they naturally annexed a number of Egyptian words. There is a word, for example, that comes in the story of the Passover, which is Egyptian, the word

"Abib," a title which was given to one of the months. This Egyptian word means a green and tender herb. That name was afterwards disused and the month was called Nisan, a word which has a totally different meaning, and is of Assyrian or Chaldean origin. The word Abib plainly testifies to the fact that Israel was once in Egypt. Again, there are peculiar words which we find in the Moabite story about Balaam and Balak, where we read, "Come, curse me this nation." The word used for "curse" there is an uncommon word; in fact, it is only used in this sense in the passage where Balaam cursed Israel. It may prove some day to be a Moabite expression. Similarly there are Syrian, Chaldee, Persian, and even Greek words just where you would expect to find them.

§ 10. *Topography of Palestine.*

Again, I need not remind you, because it is so well known now—some of you have been travellers in the East, and you have noticed it with your own eyes—that there is a strong topographical element in the Bible. It has been considered and verified by the modern researches of the Palestine Exploration Fund. Thus the Bible is weighed in the balances of the explorer, and it is not found wanting.

§ 11. *Theology of the Bible.*

I must now speak about another peculiar element in the Book, namely, the theological element running through it. This is closely associated with the historical element. The first chapter of Genesis sets forth God in creation; the rest of the Book introduces God in history, and exhibits the Divine side of history; God's purpose, God's promise, God's providence. How wonderfully they come out!

Take, for example, the twelfth of Genesis. I often go back to that chapter; it is such a wonderful turning-point in history. There you have an old man brought by God's providence to the front, and called from another country to this new centre. Three promises are made to him. One promise concerns the land—"I will give thee this land"; one concerns his family—"I will make of thee a great nation"; and one concerns an individual who should rise up out of his family—"In thy seed shall all the nations of the world be blessed." Here we have three germs of truth; and the rest of the Old Testament seems intended to show how these three promises, based upon the Divine purpose, were carried out by God in His providence. Accordingly the words "in thy seed" run on. They are said to Isaac, and again to Jacob; and as the multiplication of the family took place, so the seed was to be

assuredly looked for, and the blessing was to be applicable to all the nations of the world. The Bible is evidently a cosmopolitan Book. The whole of the early part of Genesis is cosmopolitan, and although it seems to narrow down when our attention is fixed on Abraham, yet the promise that "all the nations of the earth" should receive a blessing in one of Abraham's seed, affords a wide outlook. These chapters are a precious gift; they constitute the Magna Charta of the whole world. Men of every nation, whether of yellow race, white race, black race, copper-coloured race, can come to this chapter and say, "Here is the promise of a blessing for us all, and we go to Christ for its fulfilment."

§ 12. *The Bible a Revelation.*

We often call the Bible a revelation. Why? Because it is an unfolding of the purpose, promise, and providence of God. God can be revealed in two ways; there will be a third way which we will look at later on, but in two ways quite plainly—by what He *says*, and by what He *does*. Take, for example, what He says concerning Himself in the thirty-fourth of Exodus, where He describes His attributes in about half a dozen expressions. Take those attributes so described, and read the history of all the centuries in the light of them. See how God is slow to anger, of great kindness, abundant in mercy, forgiving

iniquity, transgression, and sin; and yet He will not clear the guilty; that is to say, mischief, evil, sin, cannot be overlooked, but must be faced and dealt with. That is the key to the contents of the Book, and to the history of the world. As you go through the Bible you feel that it is an unfolding of the nature of God, the revelation of whose attributes is packed up and concentrated in that thirty-fourth of Exodus.

The more thoughtfully we read the Book, the more we find that it is full of God—God in Nature, God in history. We see His methods of dealing with the Race; we see the laws of retribution; we see the efficacy of prayer; we see the power of repentance; we see that if man does not seek God, at any rate God seeks him, and that is infinitely more important to begin with; we feel that God is like a good shepherd looking for His lost sheep.

When we come to the end of the Old Testament, we are left in an attitude of expectation, and we say, "What next?" Then we turn on, and we come to these other Books which make up the New Testament. What are they? First we find four Gospels, which are memoirs of one Person; then the story of the beginning of His Community; then the letters from His authorised followers. What a little Book it is, but how precious! It is like a mustard seed, but when it has grown up its influence is that of a great tree.

§ 13. *Inspiration of the Bible.*

I have to pass on, and I must come to my last department, namely, the inspiration and the influence of the Bible. How did this unique collection of books come into existence? Here we have a series of writers—consciously? no, unconsciously—contributing to a great result. It is rather like the case of a cathedral. There is the ground prepared, a Theistic ground, on the first page of the Bible. Then the foundation is laid in Genesis; afterwards the superstructure in the days of Moses; then the building up of the columns and the rest in the days of David and the Kings; then a break for a time, and at length the top stone is put on in the days of Christ and the apostles. What a history it is! and yet none of these men knew how wonderfully they were contributing to this one result. Who had the key? Whose purpose was it? I have referred already to a sentence in the Epistle to the Hebrews which says, "Every house is built by some one, but He who built all things is God." I think that as we saw in the first Address that there is a purpose in Nature, so to-day we may recognise a purpose in Revelation—a stream of purpose running through the Books, a stream of promise, a stream of prophecy, a stream of providence. What a wonderful record we thus possess!

People sometimes shrink from the idea of God

speaking to man. I confess I should be surprised if He did not speak to man. If it be true that there is a relationship between God and man far more close than the relationship between God and the creatures below us, then what marvel is it that God should wish to come, and should determine to come, into communion with man? The marvel would be if He did not. If He is anything of a Father, if our gift of fatherhood springs from His fatherly nature, then it is natural that He should commune with us; and the mystery is why we have not more full and constant and frequent communication with this Author of our being. I think we shall see the reason and the solution a little later.

In the meantime look at the Divine method. The Divine method is to use literature—a Book, but the book is like Nature: it did not come into being at once. The method was this: first, the selection of persons; secondly, the commission given to those persons to write; and, thirdly, inspiration given to them to write the right thing. I understand really by inspiration that which enabled each writer to do the thing God wanted him to do. I am not desirous to-day, while dealing with the question on broad lines, to go into exact details of the method, but I think it is this: that wherever God gives a man a commission He gives him the power to carry out that commission, and that is inspiration; so that a man under com-

mission to speak, or a man who felt that God had said to him, "Write," would speak or write what God told him. He would select the proper topics; and he would use in expressing them the proper words. Inspiration by no means necessarily means originality. A writer might copy out of all sorts of books, as you find done in Ezra, Nehemiah, and elsewhere. A writer might make use of his predecessors' works and of the knowledge of the day, only he must be Divinely guarded from error on any material point, for example, on such a material point as the nature of God, which is the most important of all subjects.

But there is this also in inspiration—that it gave the writer what I might call an uplift, so that he saw things from a wider outlook than he would otherwise. Sometimes you can almost catch a sentence being added from the larger outlook; for example, St. Paul once said, "There remains for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, will give me at that day," and then the inspiration lifts him up, so he adds, "Not for me only, but for all that love His appearing." See how cosmopolitan this makes his message. Or take St. John. He says of Christ: "He is the propitiation for our sins"—then inspiration comes and lifts him up—"and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." Observe how inspiration gives a higher view of propitia-

tion as not confined to one little community, but as a remedy for the sins of the whole world. Again, when John the Baptist saw Jesus he said, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away"—my sins? Israel's sins? No—"the sins of the world." Similarly Isaiah, in his fifty-third chapter, says, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Such is the grand view of the truth which he is enabled to set forth through inspiration.

§ 14. *Influence of the Bible.*

Now we come to the last point—the practical influence of this Book. Its influence and its inspiration run together. It is inspired and it is inspiring. It has that healthy tone, that strength, that purity, that reverence for the true God which make it the light of the world and the salt of the earth. Thank God it is undenominational! I am often puzzled and astonished at what I read in the newspapers on the Education Question, as if the Bible could not be trusted. The Bible is a grand gift for the world, and we need not stop—I am glad that the Bible Society does not stop—to ask, "What denomination are you?" It says, "If you want the Book, read it, and if you do not want the Book, still read it"; and so this Book has been

translated into four hundred different languages, and it is proved to have something in it for every Race under the sun. This is because it is inspired. It has a very wide embrace. It cannot be called the Book of the Church of England, or the Book of any particular Church, or the Book of any nation, or the Book of any age. It is a children's story-book, and the full-grown man goes back to it up to the end of his life.

It has been sorely persecuted. I wonder whether Jehoiakim was the first person who picked up a penknife and cut up a Hebrew roll and threw it in the fire. He certainly was not the last. What a wonderful story is connected with the way in which the Bible has outlived its many persecutions. Our answer to its persecutors is that we will circulate the Book. So when at St. Paul's, hard by, in the days of Tindale, the then Bishop of London bought and burnt the New Testament, Tindale reprinted it with the money he thus obtained. But you will say, What is it that makes any one want to burn the Bible? I think the feeling against the Bible is because of its denunciation of sin and its assurance of judgment, and also because of its strict impartiality. The rich and the poor meet together in this Book, and the Lord is regarded as Maker and Judge of them all. There is something which money and title and gifts cannot buy which is to be found in this Book by all the world. It makes

a strong protest against error and evil-doing, and consequently those who teach error and practise evil do not like it. How can they like it under such circumstances?

I must close. I think you will see by this brief, broad outline what a treasure you possess. May I venture to ask you whether you are using it in the very best way? You have it; you read it; do you seek to interpret it with all the prayer and all the pains you can? Let me give you only two rules for interpretation. One is to interpret each part of the Bible by the rest of the Bible, because there is oneness through it; and the other is, let Christ be the key to the Bible, for the Old Testament leads up to Him and the New Testament springs from Him. Let all your roads of reading lead you to Christ.

III

THE MISSION OF CHRIST; HIS CREDENTIALS; CROWNING EVENTS OF HIS MISSION.

§ 1. *Recapitulation.*

I HOPE that the way is cleared now, by means of the preceding Addresses, for the great subject which is before us to-day. I dare say some have thought that I have gone rather a roundabout way, beginning first with the Book of Nature, secondly with the Book of Scripture, and that I might have plunged better *in medias res*. But different minds have different ways, and I have been led through the course of a fairly long life—it is fifty years since I first felt the burden of the difficulties of belief and the necessity of searching the matter out—to look at it in the way in which I have tried to lead you, and I hope that if it is not exactly the shortest way, it may prove the best in the long run. First, we have been appealing to the Book of Nature, including Human Nature; and, secondly, to that

Book which we call the Bible, which we found to be thoroughly historical, both with regard to its external aspect and its internal. We saw also what good reason we have to believe that it is both inspired and inspiring.

§ 2. *The Fall of Man.*

Now, what is the drift of that marvellous collection of books? What is the idea, the thread, that runs through the collection? First, when we open the Bible at the third chapter of Genesis, whatever our feeling on the chapter may be, we find that it puts its finger on the weak spot in human nature and that it represents what we know by experience to be a painful reality, even if it is couched in language which we may think is like the language of a story told to a child. But, secondly, in that very same chapter there is opened a door of hope for the family of man. These two things are the key to the whole position. The thing that happened to man is usually called in the Bible *sin;* but it is a remarkable thing that both in Hebrew and in Greek the word translated "sin" has a peculiar force; it means "missing the mark," or, as we might say in one word, "failure." And it is most interesting that the Greeks as well as the Hebrews should have got hold of that idea. There was a certain mark which human nature was to

have attained to. It lies, by implication, in the first chapter of the Bible, where we read, "Let us make man in our image." That was the mark and aim of man's existence—to be Godlike; and sin is the missing of that aim, a coming short, a divergence from the straight line—in a word, it is a missing of the mark. Our first parents were very much like children, and God put them to the test. He tested their loyalty and their trust, and, as you know, they failed. They failed not wholly through some defect within—we may be thankful for that—but through something, or rather some one, without, whom we call the Tempter, the Adversary, or Satan. Temptation came from without; sin was not self-generated by our first parents. Man was made on the balance in such a way that if he had been let alone untempted I have no doubt he would have stood. But "an enemy" came on the scene; and that is one of the great secrets which is opened out through the Bible. The enemy is the great mischief-maker. The very word "Satan" means an enemy or adversary; and man failed, missed the mark, through the machinations of this enemy. You will say, "How is it that there is such an enemy?" The Bible hardly tells us that, and therefore we do not know. I suppose we may know more about it hereafter. Meantime it explains many things in human nature.

What is the immediate consequence of the failure

of our first parents when thus tested? It is this: they entered on a course of disobedience and distrust; then they sought safety in hiding from God rather than in going to Him. This is what we usually call "alienation." And not only was this personal, but it was inherited. That law of heredity, with which we are now so familiar, is stamped upon the Bible history all the way through; the mischief was passed down from generation to generation; there was a hereditary proneness to go wrong and to lose the balance. The real mystery to my own mind is always this: that our first parents, when they fell, were allowed to continue, and not only to continue on the earth, but to be the parents of the millions of people that are now in existence, all of whom have caught the infection through heredity. That is the greatest of all the marvels of the Bible; and I do not think that even now, with all the light of the New Testament, we can quite see our way through it. But God will be His own interpreter.

§ 3. *The Hope of Salvation.*

Having thus recorded the fact of sin, which is what I call the weak spot or blot in human nature, the Book goes on to show how God deals with it: first in the way of Judgment, secondly in the way of Mercy. The way of Judgment comes at once. Adam is summoned, Eve is summoned, and even

Satan, the mischief-maker, is summoned into God's presence. And we find a penalty adjudged to each: shame, pain, sorrow, exclusion, decay, death. These are among the penalties so affixed. But there is the other side, the bright side: Mercy, rejoicing over Judgment, and Salvation beginning to appear; Hope and Salvation. The chapter closes with the door of hope opened. For although our parents were driven out of Paradise, there was still the Way between the Cherubim, and although they could not force an entrance through because of the flaming sword, yet they could see through, and I suppose that the offerings which were presented, as we are told in the fourth chapter, which no doubt were a sample of a great many more, were brought near to the gateway of Paradise. In a certain sense, even then, God dwelt between the Cherubim. And that idea was recovered and carried on when the Tabernacle was made, and again when the Temple was made. Thus from the beginning there were some indications that there was access to God, only it was not fully open, because the sword kept the way.

Such is the beginning of the Bible, and it is the key to the whole position. The rest of the Book contains many illustrations of God's mode of saving. Do you ask, How was He going to do this great work of restoration? He was going to do it by what you may call personal intervention. It was not to be done by the exercise of man's natural gifts and

powers, though they are wonderful; something was needed over and above. Many things are possible to man, but not this; our natural forces do not give us the victory over evil, and they do not restore us to God. So that the thing we want is Salvation given to us by One higher than ourselves —in fact by God. And this is exactly what we have. Accordingly there is a series of Divine interventions beginning long before the days of Abraham, and running through the history of the Abrahamic family, carried out by means of such men as Moses, Joshua, the Judges, and David.

§ 4. *Preparation for Christ.*

Thus gradually through the course of the ages there was prepared a platform on which the greatest work that ever happened should be wrought. And this platform had three elements in it. First of all there was the historical and theological element. Our Lord when He came into the world had Old Testament history and theology behind Him, and He started on these lines. That is all taken for granted in the New Testament. In the second place there was the prophetical element providing the programme of the things which the coming Saviour was to do and suffer. Not a programme written altogether and straight off, but here a little and there a little. I often

think it is like a child's puzzle consisting of a number of pieces; but only One Person knew how to put them together and make the programme clear, and that was the Person who came from heaven and fulfilled it. Then, in the third place, there was the ceremonial element, which was very often illustrative of some of the methods which God was going to act upon when the day came. It is interesting to study the Israelitish ceremonial and to observe what seem at first little things, but which were afterwards turned to account. For example, we read in Exodus xii. 46: "A bone thereof ye shall not break." It refers to the Paschal Lamb. Fourteen centuries afterwards a Man is hanging upon a cross; one on each side of Him has his legs broken. The soldiers, seeing that the central figure is dead, do not break the bones, they do something else instead: they pierce His side. "And so," says a witness who records the event, "two passages were fulfilled, one in the ceremonial of the Passover, 'A bone of Him shall not be broken,' and the other in one of the last of the Prophets, who lived a thousand years after the Passover was instituted, 'They shall look on Him whom they pierced'" (Zech. xii. 10). As you put those passages together, though they have a thousand years between them, and fasten them, as it were, to the Cross of Christ, you see how God provided a programme, both in prophecy and in history.

§ 5. *John the Baptist.*

At last you come to the end of the Old Testament, and there follows a period of 400 years silence, and I do not think that there had ever been such a long period of abstinence from direct intervention on God's part all the way from Abraham onward. But now the silence is broken. We turn away from the Old Testament to the New, and as soon as the 400 years had passed away the sound of a trumpet is heard through the land—it is the call of John the Baptist. What a marvellous figure John the Baptist is in history! He calls himself a voice, "the voice of one crying in the wilderness." And he has three great messages to deliver: First of all, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." Have you noticed when you read these words in Isaiah that the word LORD is in capital letters, showing that it stands for JEHOVAH? "Prepare ye the way of the LORD JEHOVAH," Israel's King; He is coming to set up His Kingdom. The second Message is, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away," or beareth, "the sin of the world." The world, not the Jew. It reminds us of the promise we saw in the twelfth of Genesis: "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Sin-bearing: "sin" is the mischief; "bearing" is the hope. All the centuries that had passed had tended towards this. When was that hope to be ful-

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filled? At last the Sin-bearer arrives, and John the Baptist bears witness of Him. The third message was to the effect that the Sin-bearer was to baptize with the Holy Ghost.

Such was the method in which John the Baptist broke up the fallow-ground of Judaism and prepared the way for the coming of Christ. Still nobody knew what was going to happen. Even the Baptist himself did not fully know. He was a voice, but he was not so certain of many of the things which he spoke about as to be able to explain what they meant and how they would be fulfilled. The future was almost as unknown to John as it was to the Jews of his time. He was just a prophet called to make certain utterances.

§ 6. *Jesus Comes on the Scene.*

And now the Lord Jesus Himself comes on the scene. The time of His coming was fulfilled, and the place of His birth was, as it had been appointed, a mere village, six miles south of Jerusalem; yet it had been the birthplace of David. There Jesus was born, of kingly line, and yet in a humble position. A cattle-stall seems a strange place for the descendant of an earthly king to be laid in; but this was illustrative of His mission. One of the first public acts of Jesus (in or about the year 25 A.D.) was to purge the Temple courts. And He had no sooner done it than people began to question His

authority. "What sign showest Thou in that Thou doest these things?" In answer to this class of inquiry it was necessary that the Lord Jesus should show His credentials. I desire in the present Address to point out what these credentials really were.

§ 7. *His Mighty Works.*

Picture yourself as one of the people living in His time in that land; say you are a Galilean; that you suddenly heard of Jesus that He had been doing certain things in this Temple, and that you and others had come round and asked, What right had this Personage to do these things? What are His credentials? The very first thing to which your attention would be called would be His mighty works, the things which He did. The Greek Testament describes these mighty works by three words: the word *dynamis* (whence our word dynamic), which signifies the output of power; the word *teras*, which answers to our idea of a miracle, something which causes wonder; and the word *semeion*, a sign, showing that the things which He did were significant of His mission. These three words beautifully express the great reality. There is an idea in some people's minds that a miracle is a breach of the law of Nature. The Bible never says so. Much depends on your view of Nature. Some people take a restricted view of Nature and say Nature means all we know in this twentieth

century. Others say Nature is bigger than we suspect, and that it must include things which may be known by the twenty-first century. Others say that the last word of science must be taken into consideration before we know what Nature is.

But when shall we get this last word of science? Science keeps overthrowing the views of our predecessors. We hardly know where we are. In the medical profession, for instance, I understand that the books of one generation are considered utterly useless for the next. And so it is in other departments of knowledge to some extent. So we need not trouble ourselves with the theory that Christ's mighty works involved breaches of the laws of Nature. But they certainly show that He exercised superhuman powers. That is the real point. Christ acted as a Being higher than man, in the things that He did. There are three grades in existence: that which is beneath the human; secondly, the human; thirdly, that which is above the human; and it is in that superhuman atmosphere that the Lord lived and wrought. When you look at the record of His mighty works, His signs, you see that He was absolutely unembarrassed by the cases brought before Him; that whatever was to be done He did it openly, calmly, confidently, unfailingly. Moreover, all the things that He did were significant; they bore on His mission; they were healing, saving, warning, and teaching.

§ 8. *His Teaching.*

The second of our Lord's credentials is His teaching. I think our Lord is called Teacher forty times in the Greek Testament. Unfortunately we often translate it Master. But the Greek word is *Didascalos, i.e.*, Teacher, answering to the Hebrew word Rabbi. Our Lord was a Teacher; all through the short time of His ministry He was engaged in teaching and preaching, in the Synagogue, on the roadside, and in the house. When, after His resurrection, Mary Magdalene suddenly recognised Him, she said, "Rabboni," that is, "My Teacher." That was her thought: "Here is my Teacher come back again."

When you study the Lord's teaching you see how simple, attractive, pure, far-reaching, and authoritative it is; how deep are the subjects; how heart-searching is the Master who teaches, lifting up some and casting down others. Think, for example, of the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, a picture contained in very few verses. Consider the case of these two men, and you will get an impression about the way of justification which you might look for in vain in some of the works of our great theologians.

§ 9. *His Character.*

The third of our Lord's credentials is His character. First, what He *does*; secondly, what

He *says*; and thirdly, what He *is*—His character. After all, what you are is really far more important than what you say or what you do, although your words and deeds are the leaves and fruits of the tree of your life, while the sap answers to your thought, feelings, aims, and spirit.

When you investigate the character of Christ as a subject of sacred study you find it a combination of opposite excellences. That is its peculiarity, and almost every writer on the character of Christ has noticed it. For example, He was perfectly pure and yet absolutely tender-hearted. Purity sometimes is rather like an iceberg; but here you get purity without the ice; purity coupled with warmth of heart, sympathy, and feeling. Again, He was absolutely devoted, enthusiastic, zealous in the cause of God, yet perfectly calm, self-contained, and self-controlled. Pursue this subject, and you will realise more and more that our Lord's character is not to be measured by the ordinary human standard. It seems grander and more wonderful.

We must never forget, in estimating His character, that the mischief, the blot on human nature which we have already referred to, is not to be found there. He was sinless; there was no mark of failure in Him. He is the one Being who has lived upon earth who never needed to repent. Even when He was facing death, and when He poured out His soul in the garden of Gethsemane, there was never a

word of sorrow for the past as if He had made any mistake; His prayer concerned what was before Him, and had no reference to His past history. When we look back into our life how ashamed we are! But when the Lord looked back He had nothing to be ashamed of. He actually challenged His company once, saying, "Which of you convinceth" (or convicteth) "Me of sin?" The sinlessness of Christ is one of the grand marks of His character when viewed in the light of God. And this perhaps throws light on a singular expression used in the Epistle to the Hebrews once, where our Lord is described as "separate from sinners," literally "separated," parted off from sinners, as if there was a gulf between Him and them; and so there was. He never said "*We* are sinners," as if including Himself. There was really a moral and spiritual gulf between Himself and those whom He loved and whom He called to Himself, and with whom He sat down and ate and drank. This phenomenon has to be borne in mind when we try to solve the mystery of His unique Personality. It was like the sunshine of Perfect Love towards the Father and towards man, beaming down upon an alienated and selfish world.

§ 10. *His Fulfilment of Prophecy.*

The fourth credential of Christ was the fulfilment of the passages contained in the Old Testament,

And here the Jews of His own time were in a little difficulty, because many of them did not know that He had been born at Bethlehem; moreover, most of the passages in the prophetic programme did not refer to our Lord's life, but rather to His death and resurrection and glorious coming hereafter. Hence it was not until after our Lord's resurrection that people began to see the force of the Old Testament prophecies. Still, our Lord appealed to the Old Testament during His lifetime. "Search the Scriptures, for these are they which testify of Me."

§ 11. *His Resurrection.*

The fifth credential is the resurrection of Christ from the dead. In answer to the question, "What sign showest Thou?" He said, "Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up again"; and in saying this He spoke of the temple of His body.

The nature and evidence of the resurrection of Christ is well discussed in Professor Milligan's "Lectures" on the subject, and in a little volume by the late Dr. Kennedy, published by the Religious Tract Society. I have carefully examined the difficulties suggested by Professor Percy Gardner in his "Exploratio Evangelica." I think he has misunderstood both the weight of the evidence and the nature of the event. No one saw the Lord rise, because resurrection meant spiritualisation; but plenty of His followers saw Him after His resur-

rection, and bore public witness to the fact. That eminent and fair-minded historian, Dr. Arnold, says in one of his sermons on the Christian life, "I have been used for many years to study the history of other times, and to examine and weigh the evidence of those who have written about them; and I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort, to the understanding of a fair enquirer, than the great sign which God has given us, that Christ died and rose again from the dead." (*Sermon on the Sign of the Prophet Jonas.*)

There are two more credentials. One of them we shall have before us in the next lecture—that is, the baptism with the Holy Ghost; and the other is still in the future; it is our Lord's glorious Second Coming, when all doubts and difficulties will vanish away.

These, then, are the seven credentials which constitute our Lord's claim. I will repeat them in order to clinch them: His mighty works, His teaching, His character, His fulfilment of the Old Testament, His resurrection, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the glorious second coming in the future—a sevenfold testimony to the mission of Christ.

Supposing we had been living in those days, and had been well trained in the Old Testament, and had come, shall I say? under the influence of John the Baptist; and supposing we had had the

advantage of a few days in the company of Jesus Christ. Do you not think we should have said, "We have found the Messiah, *i.e.*, the promised Lord," if we had been Jews? We might not understand quite what it meant; still, we should be persuaded that we had got the Person whom the Hebrew Scriptures point to. See what an advantage it was to have the Old Testament to prepare for Him; how it helped the thoughtful Jew to identify Him when He came. "We have found the Messiah!" Yes, and you may turn the sentence round and say, "and the Messiah has found us," which is perhaps the more important of the two.

§ 12. *His Deity.*

But, having got that far, we must go a little further and ask: "What manner of being is He?" We feel almost inclined to say to Him what Saul's captain said to David, "Whose son art Thou?" not "Who art Thou," but "Whose son art Thou?" Whose son was Christ? We notice that all through the Gospels He is called by three names: first, the Son of Man; secondly, the Son of David; and thirdly, the Son of God. The Son of Man. Well, decidedly and decisively He was human; there could not be any doubt of that; He was a real man. The Son of David. Yes, He was of the Kingly line, and many a man recognised this in some way or other.

When the blind man of Jericho said, "Thou Son of David, have mercy upon me," how did he know He was the Son of David? He had cried out, "What is all this noise about, this tramping of feet?" and the people had answered him, "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by." Observe, however, that he did not call out, "Jesus of Nazareth, have mercy upon me!" No; it was, "Thou Son of David, have mercy upon me." People who have no sight very often have sharp ears and thus learn a great deal, and put things together very skilfully. So it was with this man. But Jesus, whilst He was the Christ or Son of David, was also the only begotten Son of God. It is very important to notice the words "only begotten," because you and I may be the children of God in one sense, but the Lord is the Son of God in another sense, completely sharing His nature. And so we read that "the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." In order to show the full force of the expression "the Son of God," and the unique position which Christ claimed, it is to be noted that our Lord never couples Himself with other men as if He were a mere man. He frequently refers to God as His Father. But while He taught *us* to say, "Our Father," *He* did not say, "Our Father"; not once in all the Gospels did Christ associate Himself with us as having a common Father. When He was going to ascend He put the truth in a most startling way; instead of saying,

"I ascend unto our Father," he said, "I ascend unto My Father and your Father." The relationship of Christ to the Father is evidently something unique. You remember what is recorded in the fourteenth chapter of St. John, when a strange request—and yet perhaps a natural one—was made to Him by Philip: "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us!" "Show us the Father!" I suppose they wanted some demonstration; the same kind of demonstration, perhaps, as you can produce in science, in chemistry for example; some means of demonstrating the existence and nature of the Father. What did our Lord answer? "Have I been so long a time with you, and hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Could any human being say such a thing? Could any angel say such a thing? Think of the words: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." They teach us that Christ was the visible representative of God; distinct from His Father in personality, and yet one with His Father in nature and being.

It has been often observed that most of the passages which set forth this wonderful truth are in St. John's Gospel, and some who honour Christ in various ways, but who shrink from accepting His Deity, have thought that perhaps St. John's Gospel might not be trusted, and that perhaps it was touched up by a late hand, or that it was not written

by John at all. During the last forty or fifty years there have been a good many books written, and a good many discussions on the question of the authenticity of St. John's Gospel. But this very year, one of the leading Unitarians in England has had the candour and honour to say that after examining all the external and internal evidence, he feels that he must come to the conclusion that the Book which we call the Fourth Gospel is indeed the work of John the Apostle. What effect this will have on the Unitarian body of Christians I cannot tell. The writer in question, Professor Drummond, of Manchester College, Oxford, has thus departed from the view held by his own teachers, the celebrated Dr. Martineau and others, and has come over to what we may call the orthodox teaching, which he traces back to the end of the first century.

All evidence goes to show that in reading St. John's Gospel we are reading the very words of the most highly-favoured and most intimate of our Lord's Apostles and followers. The first words of this Gospel are of vital importance. They run thus: "In the beginning was the Word." Long before there were human beings in existence the Divine Being had a mode of expressing Himself; for a Word is a mode of expression. When I speak I express what is in my mind; when I give an order with my lips the order is in my mind. And so there is within the compass of the Godhead

the Logos or Word. This Logos was with God, and was God, and was in due time manifested in the flesh. And, as St. John says, "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

§ 13. *His Mission as a Whole.*

Let us now shortly consider what the Mission of Christ really was. To put it plainly, it was to undo the mischief done by Satan, and to bring to effect the purpose which God originally intended man to fulfil. To undo the mischief; that is what St. John says: "He came to destroy the work of the Devil," or literally to undo it. And so instead of bringing a curse He has brought a blessing. Thus is fulfilled the twelfth of Genesis, where we read, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." St. Peter, in one of his earliest public addresses, quoted that passage, saying, "God has sent Jesus to bless you by turning away each one of you from your iniquities." His purpose evidently was to undo the mischief which was wrought by Satan, and to bring us back to obedience. How has He done it? Who could tell beforehand how it would be done? No one. Redemption was brought about first of all by Incarnation, the taking human flesh and blood; secondly, by Propitiation or Sin-bearing, when He hung upon the accursed tree; thirdly, by Resurrection, when He broke the bonds of

death; fourthly, by the work of the Holy Spirit; and lastly, the top stone will be laid and the whole will be complete when He comes again in His glory.

We have now seen what the mission of Christ was, and what were His credentials, and I ask, Have we not good reason to believe in Him? What alternative is there to belief? On what ground can any one dispose of these credentials and so throw doubt on the salvation of Christ? Strange, is it not, that any one should wish to get rid of Salvation? It does seem to me a marvel that we can be so blinded as to hide from such a Saviour and turn a deaf ear to His invitation; it is one of the problems that has yet to be solved. Certain Germans have now and then made the suggestion that perhaps the whole thing is a myth. But, owing to the investigations of the last thirty or forty years, this idea of a myth has dropped out, because it appears that there was no time for a myth to be evolved. As soon as it was found that the books of the New Testament were First Century works, the myth theory was quietly dropped. In fact, a myth cannot be generated so easily as some persons think. If it is not a myth, however, might the mission of Christ be an imposture? Now, whenever there is an imposture we ask, What is the good of it, what is it for? I do not suppose anybody imposes on you with a false story except with some

object; to enrich himself, I will say, in an easy way. In what way would anybody be a gainer by an imposture which sketches out the life of a glorious Saviour? Who would invent it even if he could? For what end? These questions have never been answered. There is no reason for imposture, and if any one had, out of a freak, tried to invent a gospel of salvation, I am afraid he would have soon found great difficulties in carrying it out. Not only have the Gospels the ring of Truth about them which disposes of the theory, but they were written when Christianity was comparatively a young religion, and there were plenty of people who could testify to their truth, and who would have repudiated them with disgust if they were frauds.

Now if the mission of Christ, with its credentials, is neither a myth nor an imposture, you are driven to the grand conclusion that it is true, and that the Christ of history has come from the God of Love, that He is a Saviour, that He is restoring man, and that He is bringing about that grand result of which we only see the earnest and the foretaste, but which we hope to have in its fulness in the days, the glorious days, that are yet to come.

I feel in dealing with this subject how impossible it is to speak worthily of the very grandest topic in the world. But perhaps this simple outline may help us to see more clearly why we believe, what we believe, and what we hope for.

IV

THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT: TO THE EARLY CHRISTIANS; TO OURSELVES.

§ 1. *Survey of the Argument.*

TO put shortly the method of study which we have followed, it is this: We have looked at Nature and at Man, and we have found both in Nature and in Man (whom you may regard as part of Nature, or as somewhat above the rest of Nature) traces of a power and purpose higher than what Nature and Man can account for; and if we keep fast hold of the position of man as the great revealer of that which is above man, I think we shall always start fair in dealing with these great questions which are before us. Nature conceals God; man reveals God.

We saw, in the second place, that the Scriptures are a unique collection, with a purpose running through them which the writers could hardly have thought out for themselves, the teaching of the Old

Testament culminating in the coming of a Person; the story of the New Testament recording the work and effects of that Person's coming. Thirdly, we made the mission of Christ Himself the object of reverent study, and considered the credentials of Christ, and His position as it might be regarded by the people who lived in His own time. It is wonderful how these three subjects seem to combine: Nature pointing to God through Man, Scripture pointing to Christ as from God, Christ Himself coming, fulfilling the Old Testament, and revealing Himself as a Saviour. The Old Testament taught the nature of sin, Christ taught the way of salvation and came to be the very Saviour of the world.

§ 2. *The Promise of the Spirit.*

Now I have to call your attention to this noteworthy fact: that in all the Gospels John the Baptist is represented as saying concerning the Lord Jesus Christ that He was to baptize with the Holy Ghost. Nobody understood in those days how this would be brought about. Still, he pointed to it; it must happen. It did not happen, however, during our Lord's ministry, though He referred to the coming of the Spirit again and again under such expressions as "living water," "fountains of living water," and it is evident that He knew what He should do. It might have happened during the

forty days after His resurrection, but it did not. Yet the Lord certainly bore it in mind, for He breathed upon the Apostles as if to signify the outpouring of the Spirit, and He told them somewhat later to tarry in Jerusalem until they received the promise of the Father; "Not many days hence," He said.

§ 3. *The Pentecostal Blessing.*

At last then we come to the day of Pentecost, that is to say, the grand feast of the first-fruits of the harvest, seven weeks after the presentation of the first ripe ears of the harvest. In accordance with this typical rite, seven weeks after the resurrection of Christ ("the first-fruits" in one sense) came the promised outpouring of the Spirit, which ushered in the first-fruits of the Christian harvest. In studying the Pentecostal blessing we are too much inclined to give all our attention to the outward and visible signs. We talk much about the gift of tongues, but it is far more important to consider what the tongues said. What were the Apostles all speaking about? They were proclaiming the wonderful works of God. It is quite clear that, although the tongues were a sign, the real effect produced upon the Apostles was something within. What did it consist of? You may gather it up in two words: Feeling and Force. Christ had reached them from without; the Spirit reached them from

within. It is interesting to observe what different materials we have before us in these four Addresses. First came the Book of Nature, which includes the universe; secondly, a Bible which you can hold in your hands; thirdly, a Person, Divine but sharing human nature, and so, One Whom His contemporaries could see and listen to and handle; and now, in the fourth place, we have to consider the mission of a Spirit Whom we cannot see or feel in the literal physical sense, but Who dwells within the heart, breathing into the human being, inspiring with force and with feeling, manifesting Himself as the spirit of holiness, the spirit of light, the spirit of power, and so fusing Himself with one's own spirit that a Christian cannot tell where his own spirit stops and God's Spirit begins. That is the position of things introduced by the day of Pentecost; and there has never been in all the religions of the world anything like this strange beginning.

§ 4. *Apostolic Preaching.*

Now look, in the first place, at the immediate results of the Spirit's action. Perhaps the first result that would strike the people in those days was the Preaching. On that very day, when it was still practically morning, these twelve men who had hitherto not been particularly conspicuous, and who had not been trained in the schools, stood up to-

gether in a cluster, or perhaps divided themselves into several groups, amidst the crowd of excited Jews from many places who were gathered together, and all began to tell out something, to proclaim something. They were like heralds of an invisible King. And what did they proclaim? Here again it is far more important to consider what they said than how they said it. The first thing they proclaimed was a simple fact: that the Jesus Whom thousands of those people were familiar with by sight, Whom thousands had probably heard preach, and Who had been a blessing to many, that same Jesus, Who had been nailed to the cross, had risen from the dead; God had raised Him from the dead. That was just a matter of fact, and they kept pressing that simple fact, and they said, "We are witnesses." You will bear in mind that no one saw Christ rise, but they saw Him after His resurrection. They could not see Him rise because of the nature of resurrection, but they could see Him afterwards. And they said, "We have eaten and we have drunk with Him after His resurrection." The second thing that they preached about was the ascension of Christ, or shall I call it His exaltation? and the consequent outpouring of the Spirit, the results of which men saw and heard. "God hath exalted His Son, God hath lifted Him up on high, and He, being exalted, hath poured out this which ye now see and hear." So that all the operations produced by the

Spirit were to be regarded as the Spirit's testimony to the mission of Christ. The fact is that we cannot altogether separate between the mission of Christ for us and the mission of Christ through the Spirit in us. The third thing that the Apostles were very careful to preach was the Hope which was written in the Old Testament, and not yet completely fulfilled; because although a great many passages were fulfilled in the coming, the dying, and the rising and ascending of Christ, still there was a large residuum of passages which stood over. And the Apostles briefly and with authority dealt with them, and said that heaven must receive Christ for a time, and that afterwards the day was coming when the King who was in heaven should come down to earth again.

These were the main subjects of the first preaching. But you can imagine that somebody might have said in those days: "Well, if our King must needs rise, ascend, and come again, why need He have died? What was the good of His death? It looks gratuitous at first for Him to die if all this was to happen afterwards. Why did not He live and finish His appointed work and then go up? Why must He first go down into the ground before He went up? Why must there be crucifixion, and an agonised parting between His soul and His body, and the commending of His Spirit to His Father? Part of the preaching, therefore, consisted in the unfolding

of the programme contained in the Old Testament as illustrating the need of the death of Christ.

In order to give you a sample of what I mean, I shall refer to the eighth chapter of the Acts, where Philip is called to go and join himself to the chariot of the Ethiopian eunuch. This man is, providentially, at the very moment reading the fifty-third of Isaiah, the grandest chapter in the Old Testament, as setting forth the programme of our Lord's sufferings and resurrection. After hearing what this notable person was reading, we are told that Philip opened his mouth and preached to him Jesus. We can well imagine the line he took.

These, then, were the subjects of preaching: the resurrection of Christ as a fact, the exaltation of Christ, and the consequent outpouring of the Spirit, the coming again of the King in the days that are future, and the exposition of the crucifixion of Christ in the light of the Old Testament. That preaching was probably the most prominent thing which would have struck you if you had been living in Jerusalem in those days.

§ 5. *Changed Lives.*

But the next thing which would strike you would be the wonderful change in people's lives consequent on their reception of Christ. These men not only

began to preach, but they began to live; they lived as they had never lived before. What a change! "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away." I should like to have seen with my own eyes the change that came over some of those three thousand when they gave their hearts to Christ. The new life speedily showed itself; living led to loving, and loving led to giving. The believers in Christ were fused into one Body by the spirit of love, and showed their love in their life by giving out of what they had. We often say now that the pocket is a sort of self-registering thermometer by which we can tell the heat of our affections towards Christ. See how it registered in those days! It was up at fervent heat; the men were "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." No idea of the witness of the Spirit to Christ would be a complete one which did not take in the wonderful change in the feeling and spirit of the first Christians.

There was another phenomenon which soon came to the front, and if you had been a careful observer and lived on some years, you would have seen it, namely, the grace of endurance. Opposition soon arose, as the Lord said it would. "He that hath no sword let him sell his garment and buy one"; that is to say, "You must be prepared to face opposition and persecution for My name's sake." It first arose from the Sadducaic party, which was the clerical

party in those days; then from the Pharisaic party, which did not like the doctrine of justification by faith. Then the Roman outsider, who believed in Cæsar, had a word to say. In this way primitive Christianity had to stand fire. If men had persecuted Christ they would also persecute the Christians. "Marvel not if the world hate you"; "the world hated Me before it hated you." Christ said that, and soon it was proved to be true.

§ 6. *The Case of Peter.*

It is clear that Preaching and Living, Loving and Enduring, were marks of the change which took place in the disciples, and were thus the testimonies of the Spirit to Christ's mission. But in order to make your study more definite, note the effect of the Gospel on two individuals, Peter and Paul. First, take the case of Peter. You read in the sixteenth chapter of St. Matthew of Peter rebuking Christ. What for? For saying that He is going to be crucified, to suffer at the hands of sinful men: "Be it far from Thee, Lord (he says); this shall not be unto Thee." I am thankful for the candour of St. Matthew, who tells us that. "Get thee behind Me, Satan," answered the Lord. I am thankful again to St. Matthew for honestly telling us that. Evidently at that time Peter had no idea of the doctrine of the Atonement through the blood-shed-

ding of Christ. Now turn to the first chapter of the First Epistle written by the same Peter and read these words: "Forasmuch as ye are redeemed not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ." "The precious blood of Christ!" "the Lamb without blemish and without spot!" What a change has come over Peter! Again in the 26th of St. Matthew, as Peter was warming himself at the little bonfire they had made at the end of the long hall or open court, for it was cold, a maid comes to him and says, "Thou art one of them." "I know not the man," he answers. Another comes: "Thou certainly art one of them; did not I see thee in the garden with Him?" "I do not know what you are talking about." Seven weeks later, after the baptism with the Holy Ghost, Peter stands before the Sanhedrim and before all the grand people of the country, and says, "We must serve God rather than man." What a change has come over the spirit of Peter! These are moral miracles; these are superhuman effects. If Christ's body were still in the grave would they have taken place? Not for a moment can I believe it. "*Credat Judæus*," one is inclined to say. Let any one who can, believe the folly that if Christ had remained dead Peter could have gone through these changes, the one reported in the first chapter of his own letter, and the other reported in the Acts of the Apostles.

§ 7. *The Case of Paul.*

Now take St. Paul and compare the beginning of the ninth chapter of the Acts with the end of that same chapter. In the beginning St. Paul is on his way to Damascus, full of the spirit of persecution; a red-hot fanatic against those who believe in Jesus. At the end of the chapter he is a believer himself, devoted to Jesus, resolved to do what he can for the cause he once hated. How can it be? Many have discussed this matter. A little book was written by one who bore an honoured name, a former Lord Lyttleton, on this subject. He was a man who had difficulty in believing the truth, but he set himself to study it, and after studying St. Paul he became a believer. He could not stand out against the Gospel any longer; the evidence was so strong. The late Herman Merivale, in his "Historical Studies," points to this remarkable case of St. Paul, and shows how Paul's teaching and life were made to hang upon that greatest of miracles, the resurrection of Christ.

§ 8. *Formation of Christian Communities.*

It would be possible to say something about the rapid effects of the Gospel as shown in the formation of small Christian communities. I will only mention one case and pass on. It is the case of Thessalonica. And if you want to observe the effect of the Gospel

in a few weeks on a considerable number of persons you cannot do better than read the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, which was written only a short time after the people first heard the Gospel.

§ 9. *The Gospel and the Roman Empire.*

What shall we say of the effect of the Gospel on the Roman Empire? This is a large subject; but it can only be touched upon here. It has been fully dealt with by Deans Milman and Merivale. I have before me "The Student's Gibbon"; that is to say, Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," a wonderful piece of history. Gibbon was not what we should call very much of a believer in Christianity, but his testimony is all the more valuable. He writes thus:—

"While the Roman Empire was invaded by open violence or undermined by slow decay a pure and humble religion, gently insinuating itself into the minds of men, grew up in silence and obscurity, and derived new vigour from opposition, and finally erected the triumphant banner of the Cross on the ruins of the Capitol." That is how he begins his chapter on Christianity. The story is indeed a wonderful one. The writings of Pliny and Tacitus throw much light on the difficulties which had to be overcome. Tacitus, the greatest of the Roman historians, in his "Annals" (xv. 44), gives an

account of the fire at Rome. You all know the common story. Most of these stories are exploded now. I do not know or care whether this one is true or not; I mean the story that Nero was fiddling while Rome was burning. At any rate, this is the substance of what Tacitus says: People accused Nero of having set fire to Rome, and in order to get rid of this supposition Nero pinned the accusation upon the Christians—"upon a set of men hated for their wickedness, commonly called Christians." Remember as you read, that the date of these persecutions of the Christians by Nero was only two years after the end of the Acts of the Apostles; that is to say, the year 64; and only one year probably after the death of St. Paul. He goes on to tell us what sort of people the Christians were. "The author of that sect was Christ, who lived in the reign of Tiberius, and suffered death by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate." "The vile superstition, suppressed for a time, again broke out not only in Judæa, the nest of the mischief, but in the city" (that is, Rome), "where all atrocities and scandalous things flourished. At first only those were apprehended who confessed themselves of that sect, afterward a vast multitude were discovered, all of whom were condemned, not so much for the crime of burning the city as for their enmity to mankind. Their executions were so contrived as to expose them to derision and contempt. Some

were covered with skins of wild beasts, that they might be torn to pieces; others were crucified; others, daubed over with combustible materials, were set up as lights in the night time and burned to death. For these spectacles Nero gave his own gardens." Suffer me to remind you again that this infamous conduct, so reported by a hater of Christianity, took place within a year of the time when St. Paul was at Rome. What a testimony! Thousands of Christians enduring false accusations calmly, and ready to suffer this horrible death for the sake of Christ!

Follow the history a little time on; go to the days of Diocletian, about 300 A.D. He ordered every copy of the Scriptures to be destroyed, every church to be destroyed, and the name of Christianity to be put out. And yet, twenty-five years after that date, Constantine swept away all this odious system of persecution, granted the freest liberty to every Christian; and when he died he was a professing Christian. What a change! From that time onward Christianity, with all its failures, has advanced, and is advancing still.

§ 10. *Characteristic Christian Principles.*

Now, I ask, what are the principles which were brought to the front by the original Christians? Christ was presented first and foremost. Everybody

was to know about Christ, whatever else happened. And certain characteristics of Christ were also presented, not the characteristics which our British forefathers and most other people's forefathers would have pushed to the front, such as stubbornness and vengefulness, and such like; but gentleness, forbearance, tenderness, meekness, a good conscience, purity, truth, and kindred virtues. The gentlest elements of human nature were set forth because they were prominent in the life and death of Him who said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

§ 11. *The Present Power of Christ.*

All that, you will say, is long ago. Very well, let us hurry on to to-day, because, thank God, the Spirit's witness is still to be heard, and we are not dependent on the Acts of the Apostles, or on the Epistles of St. Paul, or on the writings of the early church, for knowledge of the power of Christ as a living Being. "Christ in us the hope of glory" was a short way of expressing Christianity in St. Paul's days. It is so now. The same quickening redemptive force is operating now, the indwelling of Christ in the Christian is still effectual. Just as the sunshine dwells in this room, so the risen and ascended Saviour dwells in men's hearts by the Spirit. Hereby there is an assimilation of the

Christian to Christ; hereby the Christian learns to walk in the steps of his Master.

Of course there are conditions. Christianity is not a system of mechanical pressure like a steam roller which rolls everything flat before it; it has to be received and believed. The message is proclaimed, the message that God sent His Son to live, to die, to rise, to be the sin-bearer, to be a shepherd seeking the lost, to save the world; this message, when received, becomes a spiritual, moral lever in the heart of God. So it becomes, to use a medical word, a restorative, for what we need is restoration, and that is another word for Salvation. The offer is made, the opportunity is given, but it has to be taken, otherwise we suffer loss. Christianity is not compulsory: you cannot force a man to be a Christian; you may argue with him till you are both worn out, but that will not make him a Christian. Christianity means yielding to Christ. It is something which happens within the heart. I have often felt when speaking to a man that I might as well speak to a stone wall for all that I could do. There must be a Power higher than mine; and there must be a yielding to that Power.

There are many different types of Christians, and people do not become real Christians exactly in the same way. Some feel the sense of need; and they find that Christ satisfies that need. Some want forgiveness; and they find that Christ gives pardon.

Some feel impotent; they have a desire to be lifted up to a higher ideal. The late Professor Drummond, of Glasgow, said to me once in talking over this matter that he found many more people of his acquaintance coming to Christ because they wanted power than because they wanted pardon; but he said that after they had come to Christ for power they began to see what an awful thing sin was, and then they wanted pardon. So we do not all come to Christ in exactly the same way. One comes to Christ to touch Him; another is touched by Christ when he does not expect it.

The Gospel evidently has to do its perfect work. Salvation is first to be taken in, and then wrought out in daily life. Christians must all work out their salvation in that sense. The New Testament expresses it—and we feel it to be—a change of life, inward and outward. It is a transition from darkness to light, from bondage to liberty, from selfishness to love. A Frenchwoman got hold of a tract last year and ran about among her neighbours and said, "I have found God!" She had known Him by name all her life, but now she had found Him. There was something in the tract about the Lord Jesus; she did not know what it was, but she said, "I have found God!" and invited all her neighbours to come and find Him too. This is a class of witness which one can appeal to in the present day, and I am sure I need not go out of this

Hall to find many who, if time and circumstances permitted, could stand up and tell the story of the way you have found Christ and the way Christ has found you, and how real He is to your souls. And after all, that personal testimony is a great power. What experiment is in science, experience is in Christianity. Experience is tasting, taking, seeing. We say, "Taste and see." You can see an object ninety millions of miles away, and far more, but to taste a thing it must touch your tongue. And Christ must come very near to me in order that I may be able to taste and see how gracious He is.

§ 12. *Accessible Instances.*

How easy it would be to go outside this Hall and within almost a stone's throw to bring you glaring instances of men who have been sunk in iniquity, and of women too, who have been brought out by Christ. Find your way to the house of the London City Mission and ask the secretary to introduce you to one of the missionaries, and if you wish to pursue the subject—and I would like you to do this for yourselves—ask one of the missionaries to take you round, or to introduce you to a few people who are thoroughly converted. Read the Society's monthly magazine; there you get trustworthy narratives of men who were darkness but are now light in the Lord. I often think of that text in Corinthians,

"Such were some of you." It follows after a list of terrible people. "Such were some of you, but you are washed, you are sanctified, you are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." That is Christianity. That shows that Jesus is One to be believed in.

Let me tell you of one case which came to my knowledge quite lately. There is in Japan a native gentleman who, for some breach of order, was immured in prison for (I believe) seven years. He hated Christianity, and had violently opposed it. During his imprisonment his wife became a Christian; I need not tell you the circumstances. He was most indignant; and when she came to visit him in his prison he poured out the torrents of his wrath upon her. News of it came to London, and a lady in a southern suburb was so interested in the story that she resolved to pray for this man every day. For four years that lady has prayed for him, though she had never seen either the husband or the wife. That shows you something of Christianity. Unselfish, believing prayer is a real business. It is not a mere mild sort of amusement, it is an exercise; it means real spirit-work and faithful labour and giving up of time. Every day for four years she has prayed; and lately the answer has come, and it has come in a very striking way. The Scriptures were permitted to be put into the gentleman's hand, and his heart began to be opened

as he read them. Ere long he came to the light. Speaking of the change which had taken place, he said: "It seemed as if a physician touched me with his healing hand and saved me from a mortal disease." That is salvation. Whose touch was it? Can you doubt? The Saviour had touched the prisoner. If you went to that man now * he would say, "Believe in Jesus? Of course I do. He is everything to me!" "And the texts of Scripture," he says, "are like the stars of heaven to me." Such are the walking, living evidences of Christianity. We read or hear the story of the past; we cannot do without it; that is the material on which our mind works. But there is also the Eternal Spirit within, operating on the springs of human life, producing the Christ-like nature.

§ 13. *Foreign Missionary Work.*

Let me say a few words with regard to what may be called the work of spreading Christianity—to go beyond what is purely personal—among other people. Of course one must include all direct foreign mission work. It was only a few years ago since a notable missionary in the heart of Africa, Mr. Lloyd, worked his way into the forests where the pigmies live. He wanted to find them if he could. One day he was going to take a shot at

* He has just been released (August, 1904), and has begun Christian work.

what he thought was a monkey running along the branch of a tree when one of his boys stopped him and said, "Don't shoot! it is a man! it is a man!" He was very much astonished. Of course he did not shoot. A little time afterwards he came to a clearing, and he was told that in this clearing he was more likely than in any other place to get into contact with the pigmies. There was a good deal of movement among the boughs and branches of the low trees all round. He was told to be very quiet, because the pigmies were all about, and they had bows and arrows, and the arrows were probably poisoned. So he ordered his seat to be placed in the middle of the space and he called out in the language of Uganda, which he supposed would be more or less understood, a sort of greeting, meaning "How do you do?" or "Peace." But there was no answer; nothing happened. He waited a little time and he called out again, and there was no answer. On calling a third time he saw a movement, and presently there was an opening among the bushes and a little man came forth. He had a bow and arrows in his hands. Mr. Lloyd, who was a member of the Church Missionary staff, remained seated, put out his hand, and spoke in friendly tones. At length this man, who was chief of his tribe, screwed up his courage and came forward, and at last took the offered hand. You see how Christianity comes to a Foreign Race. Some of

those very pigmies are now being trained to become missionaries to their own people. This has all happened as if it were yesterday.

What a tale one could tell of similar work! I was thinking of some of the places where Christ's work is going on as I came here to-day. I thought of Mr. Peck in the Arctic regions, of the missionaries in the South American forests, of the late Mr. Chalmers in New Guinea, of Calvert in Fiji, of Paton in Aneityum, of Gilmore in Mongolia, and of other pioneers. What sent them out? Was it a desire for earthly glory, or for money? was it the passion for research in natural history? was it mining enterprise? No, none of those things; it was the expulsive power of the new affection: they must go and do good to their fellow-men. Some people call it Altruism, but it has got a better name than that; it is Christianity: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." Do not be content with seeking your own things, but seek the interests of others. That is the essence of Christianity—unselfishness, in imitation of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

§ 14. *Home Work.*

There was a very interesting book written some years ago, called "Gesta Christi; or, A Record of Humane Progress," by Loring Brace. This

"humane progress" is going on round you every day. A few days ago the Strand was blocked. What by? Telegraph boys going to a Christian Telegraph Boys' Meeting. A few days afterwards a crowd was there again. What was it? A deputation from all parts of England to the Railway Mission. A day or two later, what did we see? The Diamond Jubilee of the Central Young Men's Christian Association, which has thousands of branches. To-night (May 2, 1904) the Ragged School Diamond Jubilee. That is the way the Spirit is working. And so I might enumerate the institutions for the spiritual and social welfare of the postmen, and the policemen, and the soldiers, and the sailors, and the factory girls. Christianity is not dead; it was never more alive; and human hearts in every land are being melted through the influence of the mission of Jesus.

These are what I call the living, walking evidences of Christianity. And you will see how they come in to support that great mass of evidence which we have been considering on previous days. I know, of course, that many problems remain unsolved. Many do not believe who ought to believe, and many do not live the highest life who ought to live it; and there are still many intellectual and moral difficulties which no one can solve. But I believe that the difficulties in the way of unbelief are far greater than those which are in the way of

belief; and if difficulties increase, evidences increase with them.

The future will disclose the grandest of the credentials of Christ, for the day is coming when that which I touched upon as the last unfulfilled credential will be brought to light—I mean the manifestation of Christ in glory. And happy will those be who have a part in the demonstration of that great day. The Lord Jesus Christ will then be revealed in His majesty, and the whole purpose of God will be unfolded.

§ 15. *Conclusion.*

Now I must close. I have taxed your memory and your power of thinking, I know, but it is needful that you should give your mind to these things. They are worth studying. I have only opened the door, but it is worth your while to go in, and to go in thoroughly. Let us cultivate true thoughts of God; let Nature teach us more about Him, and let Human Nature show us more about Him than we have ever learnt before. Let the Scriptures be more thoroughly searched by us. Let Christ be studied with reverent heart; and let the working of the Spirit in others be studied as far as we reverently can do it. Finally, let the working of the Spirit in ourselves be cherished and fostered, for, after all, the Christian life is the best of

Christian evidence; and there are thousands of young men round us to-day who may be led to Jesus by contact with one loving, self-sacrificing, pure and faithful human heart. God grant that each of us may have such a heart, and that we may use our lives wholly and thoroughly for Him.

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